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Musical Artists Capitalizing on Hybrid Identities: A Case Study of Drake the “Authentic” “Black” “Canadian” “Rapper”

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Abstract

This study is an exploration of identity politics through an examination of the ways in which musical artists use the medium of music videos to create marketable, hybrid identities. With the rise of social media and the online consumption of information, music videos play a central role in global, cultural flows. I argue that hybrid identities are constructed by musical artists to gain popularity through the form of ethno-marketing. I include literature surrounding diaspora and hybridity to understand how hybrid identities become a production of heritage and human capital. By utilizing music videos specifically to construct their hybrid identities, musical artists are simultaneously enforcing and being subjected to economic, cultural, and political forms of exploitation. My methodology draws upon a multimodal discourse analysis (LeVine & Scollon, 2004) which assesses how meaning is made through the use of multiple modes of communication. I apply multimodality to the construction of music videos in which musical artists selectively chose particular sounds, images, and lyrics to claim specific identities. As articulated through the case study of Drake, I examine how the multimodal affordances of music videos allow artists to transcend borders within the digital age and reach a large audience. This study examines Drake’s bricolage of complex and intersectional identities and his unique privilege to choose to identify with different marginal communities. I assess how Drake capitalizes on shared experiences and struggles of different cultural, national, and class backgrounds through three of his music videos: “HYFR (Hell Yeah Fuckin’ Right)” (2011), “Started From The Bottom” (2011), and “Worst Behavior” (2013). Drake alludes to different cultures, locations, and social identities through these music videos to construct his place as a rapper in the music industry and articulates a hybrid identity as an “Authentic” Black/ Jewish, American/Canadian, working class member of society, and high-class rapper.

Keywords: multimodality; music; media; branding; identity politics

1. Introduction

With the rise of social media and an online consumption of information, music videos play a central role in global, cultural flows. This paper explores how hybrid identities are constructed by musical artists through the medium of music videos. I argue that hybrid identities are used as a marketing strategy for artists to gain popularity through ethno marketing. Primarily, this paper seeks to address how the musical artist Drake creates a fragmented and hybridized “star image” through the multimodal affordances of music videos. I draw upon Richard Dyer’s theory of a ‘star image’ (1998) to explore the conscious construction of a musical artist’s identity in society. I extend this theory to the creative process of artists constructing hybrid identities in their music videos. By drawing on literature surrounding hybridity, diaspora, and commercial representations in the media, dynamic identities in the postmodern era become a production of heritage and human capital.

Through a case study of the musical artist Drake, I evaluate how artists create hybrid identities and identify with cultural communities. I explore the commodification of Drake’s body in his music videos as he celebrates ongoing identifications with marginal communities. I determine how the medium of music videos create shared forms of cultural experiences of racial and class struggles. I problematize how represented identities in this medium adhere to cultural scripts, while also signifying a form of empowerment for the artist, through processes of self-branding. I further examine how the creation of a hybridized star image is an exercise of the artist’s privilege in claiming different identities. Drake constructs his place as a rapper in the music industry and articulates a liminal identity as an “Authentic” Black/Jewish, American/Canadian, working class member of society, and high-class rapper.

Through an analysis of three of Drake’s music videos, “HYFR (Hell Yeah Fuckin’ Right)” (2011), “Started From The Bottom” (2011), and “Worst Behavior” (2013), I assess how Drake uses the affordances of music videos to construct a hybrid identity. I examine how Drake disrupts the notion of a fixed identity by identifying with different marginal groups. He uses the medium of music videos to illustrate his different cultural, national, and class backgrounds. I analyze HYFR (Hell Yeah Fuckin’ Right)” (2011), on race and class; “Started From The Bottom” (2011), on class and nationality; and “Worst Behavior” (2013), on nationality and race.

My methodology draws upon a multimodal discourse analysis (LeVine & Scollon, 2004) which determines how meaning is made through the use of multiple modes of communication. By utilizing music videos specifically to construct their image and hybrid identities, musical artists utilize the multimodal affordances of music videos by selectively choosing particular sounds, images and words to construct their identities. I compare three of Drake’s music videos to examine how Drake inhabits religious, cultural, and racial identities in some music videos while consciously ignoring or even contradicting these same positions in other music videos.

When applying time-space inherent relationships (Giddens, 1991) to music videos, artists must be selective in using particular images, sounds and lyrics to create their identities. The multimodality of music videos allows both fans and critics to share cultural knowledge of a music video in understandings the song, its lyrics, and the artist’s star image. Through an exploration of the

affordances of music videos, I examine how online music videos are able to transcend borders within the digital age and reach a large audience.

I argue that Drake is uniquely privileged to choose when to identify with different marginal communities. Drake's personal experiences of oppression and biracial identity allow him to participate in various racial and religious struggles. By facing similar struggles and various forms of subjectivity, he legitimizes his place within different marginal groups. The different narrations Drake constructs in his music videos from a larger bricolage of complex, intersectional identities. Drake has become a worldwide sensation, deeply rooted in American and Canadian hip hop culture, and is an exemplary case study to examine how musical artists have the privilege to construct a hybrid identity. He alludes to different cultures, locations, and social identities through his music videos.

Drake situates himself as a high-class member of society since "Drizzy got the money" (Drake, 2011, Track 2) but also identifies himself as a lower class member of society by "starting from the bottom" (Drake, 2013, Track 1). In "Energy" (2015), he claims to have "two mortgages" to suggest that he has two homes, both in Canada and America. His religious affiliations stem from being raised in both Jewish and Catholic homes and he often conflates issues of race and religion in his music. He alludes to various religious and racial discrimination he has been subjected to as a biracial member of society. In "You & The 6" (2015), Drake reflects on being "teased for being black" yet not being "black enough" as a Western, rapper. Through his lyrics, Drake connects to different communities by creating shared experiences of belonging as well as feeling 'othered'.

By taking part in the discourse of identity politics, this paper contributes to the objectification of bodies in media; hence, I understand both the power musical artists hold in celebrating these hybrid identities in music videos, and the implications of commodifying these different cultural, national, and racial identities. I attend to the particular type of work online music videos do in mapping histories, identities, and experiences of marginalized groups to a global audience. I complicate the ways in which Drake is able to leverage different identities within his music videos to construct a hybrid identity.

2. Hybrid Identities

The popular music industry is heavily geared towards consumerism and musical artists have begun capitalizing on hybridity to appeal to a larger audience. I will define how hybrid identities were used in this particular study by drawing from the work of Mimi Sheller. Sheller (2003) defines hybridization as the mixing of identities and cultures in new and different ways. I delineated two views of hybridization from her study: appropriation and assimilation. Appropriation allows for the potential increase in creative cultural revival to counter the universalization of culture; however, through assimilation, we risk losing the distinct and personal nature of culture in the new forms. Sheller (2003) acknowledges the need for communities to assimilate certain aspects of a dominant group, to avoid losing entire cultural histories. By seeking symbols of identification, Drake fragments his position in society and his participation becomes selective within each community. Hence, these

different aspects of Drake's identity become so intertwined that they now rely on each other to function. Hybridity is inescapable and has been fetishized to be capitalized on. Within a postmodern era, a circulation of ideas, activities and cultural artifacts challenge any sense of purified race and ethnicity (Kraidy, 2005). Carefully groomed by the media, Drake can provide an insight into the widely accepted hybridization of society, in the postmodern world, and place social and cultural values on different cultures and marginalized communities.

Through these music videos, Drake is also able to voice the concerns and shared struggles of the various marginalized groups that he identifies with. Drake draws from different cultures, locations, and social identities through his music videos to construct his place in the music industry as well as establish his star image. Comaroff and Comaroff's (2009) description of turning tribes into corporations parallels the process by which Drake capitalizes on his diverse background and creating an identity-based business. Rather than exoticizing himself to risk the process of being 'othered', Drake loosely identifies with different communities. Every difference is seen as an opportunity for marketing and consumer consumption. Branding illustrates a specific outlook on the world and dictates appropriate behaviours and values (Sheth, Maholtra & Arnould, 2011); therefore, Drake's popularity is contingent on hybridity in which cultures become intellectual property (Comaroff, John, & Jean, 2009). This shapes his adoption into communities by representing multiple, culturally established norms in a non-hierarchical way. Using different forms of ethno marketing, Drake negotiates his identity by negating complete assimilation to any one culture, nationality, or race. He creates binaries between different forms of identity, in turn, instilling notions of cultural essentialism. Hence, the repertoire Drake establishes with each community remains liminal: he identifies with different communities while remaining marginalized.

I recognize his privilege in being able to choose to identify with these different groups, and also the tensions that arise in which his body is marked by race, class, and nationality. By being a hip-hop artist, Drake authenticates his experiences through his lyrics and uses the medium of music and music videos to articulate a hybrid identity. By tangentially relating to different communities, it becomes important to not silence or ignore the larger histories that accompany each position. I acknowledge that struggles faced by different communities should not be homogenized; however, I argue that many different marginal groups face similar forms of oppression, which makes Drake more relatable and accessible to a global audience.

Drake highlights how individuals face multiple forms of privileges and oppressions, based on our own experiences and appearances. He threads together cultural values for economic expansion and social relevance, within a globalized community. Ideologies are upheld by the majority of the population to uphold systems of power maintained by the dominant class (Hall, 1973); however, Drake highlights the power of musical artists to challenge social norms through the medium of music videos. Kraidy (2005) demonstrates a process of "transculturation" through which Drake identifies himself as belonging and not belonging to certain communities. By illustrating a creole identity based on Drake's "birthplace, ancestry, race, and culture" (Henry & Bankston, 1998), he is able to construct a hybridized star image in his music videos. He asserts connections to different communities in relation to the stereotypes that are manifested in Western society. Upon analyzing Drake's processes

of self-branding, I argue that his ability to hybridize his identity is weighed down by colonial and physical manifestations.

By applying Mimi Sheller's (2003) ideas of exoticism of othered beings, I believe that Drake is simultaneously a site of consuming and of consumption: his body shapes social relations of national, racial, and class distinctions. Drake's music is a form of expression in constructing his public identity but his music videos rely on iconic cultural symbols (LiPuma 2005), to be understood in a global context. He alludes to various communities associated with his diverse background but avoids being completely 'othered', as he includes "styles and pleasures" (Blake, 2011) of each group, without declaring a commitment to one community more than another. By carrying multiple identities within the media, Drake relates to various cultural traditions and practices without being forced to assimilate to one or homogenize his entire identity. This tactical organization of his identity enables Drake to transcend constructed borders of social, racial, and class distinctions. He unifies different populations under one fan base which become a multitude of people with constructed differences.

The rise of a global culture doesn't mean that consumers share the same tastes or values. Rather, people in different nations, often with conflicting viewpoints, participate in a shared conversation, drawing upon shared symbols. One of the key symbols in that conversation is the global brand (Holt, Quelch & Taylor, 2004, p. 70).

Drake is uniquely positioned to capitalize on these cultural differences to create a "global brand". Many people of different social, economic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds, who either adore him or his music, can be grouped together in one fan base or community. In viewing Drake's music videos, his fans become part of a community. Using online media platforms, such as YouTube, viewers can comment, like, dislike the video. Viewers also gain a cultural knowledge of Drake through the images and sounds used represent his star image in his music video. Members of this particular community can share this viewing experience and deliberate their interpretations of the video; hence, viewers form connections through the cultural artifact of the text itself. It fosters online communities and forms of communication.

3. The Medium of Music Videos

Music videos construct communities while enforcing economic, cultural, and political forms of exploitation. "If world music has indeed become the soundtrack for globalization, then music is not merely a manifestation of global processes and dynamics, but is the very terrain on which globalization is articulated" (White, 2012, p.1): although this statement may be giving too much agency to music in constructing world order, White demonstrates the potential of music to develop processes of globalization. White (2012) illustrates how music has become a successful medium in which global processes, such as the dissemination of ideas and expression of different cultural lifestyles, are negotiated in society. With the rise of online communication and social media platforms,

Parks (2007) and Giddens (1991) suggest that the pace of social change is much faster than prior systems to disseminate music videos across social and geographical boundaries. I apply White's notion (2012) to the medium of music videos specifically and to online platforms posted on YouTube. I argue that the affordances of online music videos allow musical artists to construct hybrid identities, and disseminate cultural, racial, and class ideologies through processes of globalization. I explore spaces and processes of othering and power relations in creating both inclusive and exclusive communities through signifiers in visual, auditory, and textual modes of music videos. The medium of music videos also allows both fans and critics to participate in decoding Drake's songs, their lyrics, his star image, and the wider conversations about race, class, religion and culture.

Many of Drake's music videos can be seen as a form of modern day "travel journals" (Sheller, 2003) as he includes representations of different places and cultures. Since these images are mediated and can only articulate particular aspects of people or places, it is similar to that of a researcher creating travel journals, by including aspects of locations or communities based on their own perspectives and interests. Drake's narrated messages in his music videos are constructed in terms of what topics, images, and lyrics are used to represent a particular star image. Sheller (2003) discusses text and images involving the objectification of bodies through visualization and places as editable commodities, for touristic viewing. Music videos are to be consumed by the masses, to sell the song and construct the star image of the artist. This framing should not only be described through the voyeuristic gaze but also as a demonstration of strategically constructing one's own identity in the sphere of online communication.

The average length of a music video is only a few minutes; hence, Drake challenges viewers to read these audio-visual texts as short narratives that are indicative of his past experiences. To understand how these narratives engage with gender, race, and class, viewers must decode the images, sounds, and lyrics (Hall, 1973). Viewers must follow a particular sequence of images and sounds, as constructed by editing techniques such as pacing, cutting, close up shots and angles, to interpret the meaning of the video and the song. I analyze how Drake uses the multimodal affordances of the music video to construct specific narratives through sounds, images, and objects. When applying time-space inherent relationships (Giddens, 1991) to music videos, artists must be selective in using particular ideoscapes and mediascapes (Appadurai, 1990) to create their identities through a directed message. I apply Appadurai's (1990) concepts of ideoscapes and mediascapes to the medium of music videos. Ideoscapes and mediascapes are two of the five factors that contribute to the global exchange of ideas and information. Each scape presents inherent power relations and multiple understandings of "realities". Within each of these dimensions, Appadurai (1990) suggests that an idea or image changes its context depending on the spectator. "Mediascapes refer both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information" (Appadurai, 1990, p.298); hence, mediascapes are used in this study to describe how hybrid identities are affected by media and communications technologies. I state the complexity of how music videos impact viewers and create imagined worlds and how they work to construct "ideoscapes" which "are composed of ...ideas, terms and images [and] was constructed with a certain internal logic and presupposed a certain relationship between reading, representation and the public sphere" (Appadurai, 1990,

p.299). I argue that Drake's narration of his economic, social, and cultural positions are problematic as they present particular contextual conventions.

Online communication platforms like YouTube affects the global circulation of information and allows messages from music videos to be far-reaching. This platform amplifies the ability of musical artists to disseminate ideologies surrounding their star images. Hall (1973) describes how power relations are naturalized through repetitive exposures to signifiers: I apply the concept of signifiers to the symbols, practices, and locations which Drake uses to construct his star image in his music videos. In reference to Saussure's (1916) sign and signified, we have different connotations and denotations with words and symbols; hence, in choosing to define and generalize concepts in his music videos Drake works to create a holistic narrative reading.

The multimodal signs in music videos, construct a combination of sounds, images, actions and objects as signifiers to convey particular ideologies in the construction of race, citizenship, and authenticity. As with many forms of communication, music videos regulate the global construction of ideologies by creating circuits of production that control the flows of people, information, and wealth. More specifically, Drake uses multimodal signifiers to create different levels of social order through race, class, and nationality within each video and construct representations of shared experiences of marginalized communities. Musical artists are privileged with the capability to define norms and are all given the agency and a strong sense of ethos. These power relations become normalized and a part of everyday life.

4. Politics of Representation in Rap Music

Drake capitalizes on different cultural, national, and class backgrounds by appealing to different communities through shared experiences. He claims that people "mak[e] stories up 'bout where [he is] actually from" (Drake, 2015, Track 15). To counter these false representations of his identity in society, Drake's music videos offer him a global visibility through the online platform of YouTube. Drake's process of self-representation highlights the power and privilege of musical artists to identify themselves within their music videos and influence ideas surrounding their star image (Dyer, 1998). Drake's music videos become forms of expression and promotional tools to construct his hybrid identity: he anchors himself in ideal notions of race, class, and nationality and claims different identities through this medium. In an interview with Rap-Up TV, Drake claims: "I feel like I don't say enough and people have their own preconceived stories about what I've been through" (2013). Hence, he uses these music videos to have agency in creating his public identity.

Rap has traditionally fetishized authenticity and "keeping it real". As hip-hop culture has moved toward a comfortably mainstream center, what does it mean for an artist to be authentic? Artists like Drake in hip hop and rap music claim to write music based on personal experiences. Rap value is dependent on "something outside of music, is rooted in the person, the auteur, the community or the subculture that lies behind it [and] critical judgment means measuring performers' 'truth' to the experience or feelings they are describing or expressing" (Frith, 1996, p.121). There is a sense of trust

placed in Drake to represent these positions “authentically”, yet he draws from pre-existing stereotypes to become more palatable in society.

Drake uses this particular medium of the music video to position himself within the realm of rap culture. He creates racial, national and economic positions of power, through imagery used in his music videos. LiPuma (2005) speaks to an urban imaginary, object, and a location, to organize space through mass mediation, in circulations of persons, goods, money and information. Therefore, a type of “reality” is formed by overruling ideas of one narrative through media representations of different racial, national and economic positions in society. This form of totality allows the media to make real life seem more false: Drake’s increasing reliance on mediascapes and ideoscapes that are familiar within Western society, are used to legitimate his claims and develop a sense of understanding and trust with his audience.

5. Problematizing Hybridity

This paper cautions against an uncritical celebration of hybridity. While Drake demonstrates a sense of empowerment in being able to identify himself, he also illustrates the dependence on stereotypes and recognizable symbols associated with different communities to be understood within a globalized context. Hall (1973) claims that representations of the self are not based on an authenticity but on an altruistic perspective in the way places, people, and objects are imagined; therefore, these mediascapes and ideoscapes are socially constructed norms that are shared within communities. Musical artists draw on iconic symbols and highlight particular aspects of a community in their music videos with signifiers that are assumed to be recognized by a particular group of people. Within a networked system, there is a coexistence of many different identities. Drake reinforces pre-existing ideoscapes and mediascapes to capitalize on his globalized identity. Cultural diversity is used as a critical tool for management, as he allows himself to be associated with diverse communities. Mimi Sheller (2003) demonstrates the different shifts in the modes of consumption in terms of how bodies, commodities, information and images can move and how they are controlled. Artists are given the power to disseminate their ideas through music videos as viewers consume these cultural products as entertainment. Often musical artists are given a sense of ethos and are assumed to be experts on the issues they address in their music. A sense of responsibility is given to Drake to speak truthfully and accurately about the life he portrays within this music videos.

I problematize how Drake uses signifiers in his music videos to engage within ideologies of hybrid identities in the discourse of hip hop music. Without being forced to homogenize his sense of self, Drake capitalizes on a fragmented identity. Arguably, Drake perpetuates stereotypes for society to better understand his music videos and lyrics, as well as speak to

generalizations of different social and cultural groups. Drake “adds to the amount of societal pressure for young Black men to fulfill damaging stereotypes” (Williams, 2015). Drake gains social capital as he artistically speaks about communities he identifies with and common struggles he has faced, through the medium of his music videos. Giddens (1991) discusses the trust that extends through exchanges between social relations and the risk and dangers that are associated with them. Similarly, an extended sense of trust is placed on Drake to authentically represent the different communities he identified with. There is an assumed “responsibility” in Drake’s construction of his hybrid identity to respectfully facilitate connections between these different cultures. Through this process, Drake takes aspects from his different identities and put them in dialogue with one another, or refuses to do so within and between his different music videos. In the consumption of online information, Drake is in a position of privilege to disseminate ideas and information about race, class, nationality, and religion in his music. In order to connect to his fans within different, cultural communities, Drake speaks about his ‘hybrid’ positions in a manner which effectively points to their values, norms, and traditions. Drake elevates particular meanings of these ‘identities’ by negotiating them in cyberspace through multimodal affordances of his music videos on YouTube (Panagakos & Horst, 2006).

6. Music Videos On YouTube

With the rise of social media and proliferation of information, musical artists can effectively utilize platforms like YouTube to construct their star image in the public eye. Online music videos, as posted on YouTube, are able to be disseminated across social and geographical boundaries to change social practices and modes of behaviour. Parks (2007) and Giddens (1991) suggest that the pace of social change is much faster than prior systems; hence, artists can capitalize on online forms of communication to proliferate their star images and music videos at a global level. Both Panagakos and Horst (2006) and Nakamura (2002) acknowledge the process of online consumption of information and surveillance to uncover power relations through technology. They question who has the power to disseminate ideas online and trace who consumes what information. Drake is given the power to selectively use imagery to represent both his star image and marginalized communities, through images and lyrics in his music videos. It can become problematic to essentialize these different communities.

Microcosms of symbolic meanings and cultural allusions make locations into assemblages. Through symbolic categorization, Drake excludes some ideas surrounding a particular culture, religion, or location in each video, in choosing to focus on particular activities and iconic symbols to construct his star image. These signs are governed by the artist to create a particular reading of the video (Hall, 1973). However, I also recognize that these signs are interpreted differently by each viewer according to their cultural history and knowledge.

Hall (1973) discusses identity as a series of discursive narratives that remain non-metanarrative. These binary organization of Drake's identity defines him as a hybrid which inflicts mechanisms that construct essential discourses. Based on the selective transplantation and adaptation of patterns and customs within the different communities Drake identifies with, he creates a type of mediated identity in his music videos.

A sense of totality is shifting in postmodernity: ideoscapes and mediascapes become representative but not all encompassing. Solidified senses of identity and place are constantly shifting. These images of ideoscapes and mediascapes are contained within boundaries of Drake's music video to represent different communities; however, these become fragmentations of Drake's star image as a whole. These fragmentations create different characterizations of classes, race, and different experiences or activities of Drake within different situations.

New media's time/space compression organizes cultural diversity into compartments, to be better understood and communicated in society (Hannerz, 1996). This time/space compression then leads to a commodification of difference (Erlmann, 1996) in music videos as juxtapositions of place and space demonstrate the semiotic frame of the West's imagined Others. What makes sections become more representative than others? What is seen as authentic (Cho, 2010), and what aspects or components make it so? Cho (2010) challenges the idea of "Westernizing" other cultures to make them more easily integrated or understood in a Western culture. She describes that these processes of representation fail to authentically represent the appropriated culture. Drake utilizes this theoretical framework to break down oppositions of us and them: he becomes an embodiment of the relationship between various types of local and global cultural identities through his hybrid position. Drake is able to appeal to many people of different cultural backgrounds through his representations of a fragmented identity. Menkes (2012) explores the processes of branding a country and discusses what constitutes Africa and the formation of communities one might belong to. A creolization of different ethnic groups, that hold different value orientations, can be connected through shared struggles as represented in music culture; however, with intersectional identities, hybridization creates individuals instead of essentialized communities.

7. HYFR

By analyzing three of Drake's music videos, I compare and contrast the ways in which Drake constructs his star image in each video; however, I have identified that "HYRR" has the most dynamic representation of his star image. Drake creates similarities and disjointed notions between his religious affiliations to Judaism and his behaviours as a Western, rap artist. Drake establishes himself within particular communities in his music videos without directly illuminating contradictions between them. However, Drake puts different his behaviours and values in dialogue with one another within "HYFR" as a rapper and a member of a Jewish community. Drake shows his fellow rap artists being disruptive within the context of Drake celebrating his bar mitzvah. Between different videos and within each video, Drake does not identify himself as belonging to one community over another

in a hierarchical sense, rather, he creates equal linkages between himself and these different cultures. In his collective “star image”, Drake establishes a tension between belonging and not belonging to different communities.

The song “HYFR (Hell Yeah Fuckin’ Right)” (2011) romanticizes a world of excess and alcohol, drugs and sex-crazed women; yet, the first frame in the music video is actual footage of young Aubrey (Drake) celebrating his bar mitzvah. During this home-movie clip, as played within the first four seconds of the music video, a Caucasian relative bends down to ask young Drake if he has anything to say to the camera and Drake yells “Mazel tov”. This clip aligns Drake with the coming-of-age event that occurs in the Jewish religion. Conversely, at fifteen seconds into this video, present day ‘Drake’ is seen standing outside an enormous Miami synagogue with his entourage, immediately showcasing his wealth while creating religious affiliations to Judaism,

Drake uses culturally significant artifacts and is seen conducting historical, Jewish practices: Drake reads from the Torah with the assistance of a rabbi at twenty-five seconds, and he kisses the ends of his talis at thirty-eight seconds as he wears a prayer shawl. However, Drake stands surrounded by fellow, black rappers starting at one minute and forty-five seconds into the video, as they are dressed in masks, longer jerseys, or are shirtless and drinking and dancing wildly, amongst people in suits and ties. Drake creates a stark contrast between the appearance and dress of these different groups of people to emphasize a dichotomy between his life as a member of the Jewish community and the lifestyle he celebrates as a rap artist. He explores the commonalities between these two identities through the celebratory act of dancing and consumption of alcohol. Hence, Drake plays on both stereotypes of upper-class rappers, while also associating himself with strong Jewish traditions. These scenes relate to a wider audience and promote wealth, partying and fame while simultaneously speaking to an audience more specifically attuned to Jewish traditions.

Drake compartmentalizes his Jewish and the African roots and his rapper and religious lifestyle as two separate ontological zones: he constructs his hybrid identity through binary distinctions. These binaries can be challenged as there are not always clear forms of distinctions between Canadian and American or Jewish and African values and traditions. Drake establishes his star image and dramatizes a cultural memory of a particular location and event in his Jewish religious practices. He capitalizes on the multiplicity of his positions and homogenizes different realms of his identity:

This video might be a personal statement about both the act of self-definition of a bi-racial and bi-national Jew and the adult process of forming a community that reflects the diversity of one's inner life (Brenner, 2012).

In previous interviews, Drake has recalled the difficulties he had growing up as a biracial member of society. While living with his mother in Toronto, he was identified as being “different” in the Jewish community or being “too black”, and was taunted and called a “schwartz”. I recognize Drake’s ability to name and label himself as biracial and engage in the struggle of racial identity amongst other people who also face this type of subjugation. During the time spent with his father in Tennessee, Drake was immersed in a community of black musicians, and seen as “too white”. “By having a biracial

Jewish hip-hop megastar kiss the Torah in front of millions of fans and affirm the relevance of Jewish ritual is a significant statement" (Brenner, 2012); hence, some fans may use this music video to form an even stronger connection to Drake, through his religious affiliations and practices. It can also be argued that Drake demonstrates issues about race being barricaded behind tropes and stereotypes, as well as cultural practices. Based on his actions of iconic cultural practices, whether supporting Drake's representation of them or not, audiences were able to understand the references he was making to that particular religion. Drake is able to capitalize on the religious allusions he constructs in his music videos, as audiences recognize and comment on these videos at the site of which the video itself is posted.

YouTube users can create discussions around religious allusions that they recognize in the video on the online page in which the video is presented. Whether or not they agree with the ways in which the religion and their cultural group are represented, there is a deeper structure in which Drake creates recognizable affiliations to groups and to cultural and religious artifacts in his video. He increases his popularity and recognition in the public sphere through his visibility and through the discussions he generates. This highlights the relevance of ideoscapes and mediascapes in forming global understandings of places, people, communities, and cultural objects within the particular medium of the music video.

8. Started from The Bottom

Music videos employ multimodal processes of images and sounds to create an understanding of a place and space. The music video *Started From The Bottom* depicts Drake as being wealthy and successful to contrast images of Drake in a working-class job. Drake claims that the video "was about the misinterpretation of [him] as a person" in an interview with Rap-Up TV (2013). Drake identifies this problem in *Started From The Bottom* and raps that he "just want[s] the credit where it's due" and that "boys tell stories about the man, say I never struggled, wasn't hungry, yeah, I doubt it...I could turn your boy into the man..." (Drake, 2013, Track 1): he argues that people speak about his life without knowing about the struggles he faced. The video includes scenes of him working his way up to the position of a successful rap artist. He celebrates his accumulation of wealth and positions himself in the process of meritocracy, in which he climbs the social ladder. This discourse of financial success is anchored in these symbols of wealth and depiction of a hierarchy of social statuses in this video. Drake identifies himself as both a low and higher class member of society.

In the music video for *Started From The Bottom*, Drake surrounds himself in signifiers of wealth and also depicts himself as a middle-class man. Through the particular order of this narrative, Drake suggests that he is successful but has worked hard in the past to attain his current, wealthy lifestyle. The narrative of hard work leads to success is one in which many oppressed groups can identify with. It can also incite a type of idealistic lifestyle: many minority groups who have started at lower positions in society, with little economic or social capital, can aspire to be like Drake. Starting at thirteen seconds and running to twenty-six seconds in the music video, the high angle shot, lighting, and the use of the colour white, highlights Drake inexpensive looking clothing, standing beside a

white Bentley convertible. This colour reflects the light and illuminates both Drake and the vehicle to evoke power and wealth. Drake juxtaposes these images of wealth and power, with scenes of working in retail, as a shelf stocker in a drugstore (Makarechi 2013). At twenty-eight seconds, Drake is dressed in what appears to be a Shoppers Drug Mart uniform, wearing a name tag, stocking shelves, and standing by a cash register. The ordered relations of these signs creates a mapped meaning (Hall 1973) of these images to indicate the artist's wealth and popularity, to legitimize Drake as a rap artist, and to suggest shared experiences with the working class members of society.

Drake puts himself into conversation with the struggle of upwards mobility in a capitalist society. He humorously mocks his workmates and dances through the aisles of the drugstore as he celebrates his promotion as a manager of the store. Through these particular actions, Drake demonstrates climbing the social ladder as a working class member of society. This parallels the following scenes of a more elaborate celebration, in which Drake celebrates his hard earned success as a rap artist. The narrative in the video dictates his rise to fame and starts with Drake working a mundane job and later receiving a promotion. These scenes are juxtaposed with images of Drake partying at a bowling club: he surrounded by alcohol as implied through raised wine glasses and inhales the shisha being smoked by the many party-goers. Then he takes a private jet across a cityscape to a large mansion where he continues to party but this time, in a much wealthier location. The music video ends with him sipping a champagne glass, as he stands alone on the back patio of a mansion to imply he owns the large home. These scenes are edited to indicate a series of actions, which develop a progression between a lower class member of society to a higher social and economic position.

This music video imagery that situates Drake in different classes through visual representations of luxury and the working class society, while anchoring him in Canada. By including a "blizzard" in the scene of wealth and filming the working class scenes in a "Shoppers Drug Mart" (Krashinsky, 2013) he attempts to show viewers his working class life in Canada. He further links this setting in the opening scene to an indoor soccer field which has "Toronto Parks and Recreation" written across it. Karim (2003) explores how national identities are linked to singular ethnic groups, presented within a specific geographic location, to create a sense of legitimacy. The staging of music videos can act as a frame for audiences to experience different cultures through a voyeuristic gaze; hence, Drake offers scenes of Toronto and Canada to viewers and suggests its importance in constructing his identity in society. By situating himself in particular locations, Drake uses cultural signs to indicate the importance of this location to his identity, in a narrative form. Conversely, Drake suggests that he is American in *Worst Behavior*, while still highlighting this low-class and high-class distinction.

9. Worst Behavior

Worst Behavior is filmed in Memphis to show Drake's "roots" in the United States, where most of his father's family lives. Drake showcases the local shops and restaurants and at two minutes and thirty-seven seconds, the sign Memphis is displayed. He situates particular actions and messages portrayed in his music video in Memphis; hence, Drake also focuses on this location as an important factor in

constructing his identity. Drake uses the medium of a music video to highlight the lower class community in Memphis. Three seconds into the video, Drake uses imagery of deteriorating buildings marked by graffiti, to articulate the poverty in Memphis. He uses these signifiers to situate himself and this narrative as a lower class member of society. At two minutes and fifty-eight seconds, Drake marches the streets and is followed by a large crowd, to position himself with this community and convey a sense of inclusivity and belonging to the area. Despite many controversies around the spelling of “behaviour” in the title of his song, the official video he released uses the American spelling; hence, Drake uses this language to identify himself as American. Morley (2001) discusses the need for media, mobility, and power to develop our idea of home: postmodern anxieties reflect a rapidly changing sense of self, which may increase a desire to constitute a space or place of identity. Hardt and Negri (2000) describe a “national identity” as a “cultural, integration of identity founded on biological continuity of blood relationships, a special community of territory, and a legislative commonality” (p.95): these components create a unified identity. Through Drake’s connection to his father and to other relatives in Memphis, Drake uses “blood relationships” to signify a sense of belonging to the racial and class systems that are infused in this location. Drake constructs his identity with particular ideoscapes and mediascapes of Memphis to constitute relationships with “homeland” (p.107) ideologies, in legitimizing a certain claim he has to this culture and to the United States.

Artists undergo processes of musical creolization under conditions of exploitation to enable consumers to connect to their music and cultural production. Drake creates a cultural identity through performance in his music videos to be disseminated in a global arena. Drake is often categorized according to different labels, in relation to his “African-American father and Ashkenazi Jewish mother” (ETHNIC 2009); hence, music videos reflect his experiences as a hybrid member of society and situate historical narratives in his music videos. He reclaims his various identities and cultures through this medium to solidify these different positions which may have “been lost” (Clifford, 1994, p.307) and disassociated from Drake, through the ways in which he is represented and consumed in external media. By suggesting “a political framework...in the here and now” (Clifford, 1994, p.307), Drake positions himself in minority groups which allude to further cultural and historical memories in terms of race, class, nationality and ethnicity, as situated in Canada and the United States. He challenges what conditions and racial expertise allow people to claim different forms of identification. Drake’s position as a rapper allows him to have a sense of ethos and legitimacy in speaking from his experiences as a biracial member of society. He is able to represent particular locations based on his biological history and speaks to minority groups whose cultures and practices he identifies with. Hence, Drake is given the privilege to speak and be heard in a global context, through his music, with a sense of authenticity

The presupposed levels of nationality within the rap culture are identified by Drake in his music videos, as he critiques being subjected to racism as a biracial member of society. In *Worst Behavior* Drake speaks about his personal history in being disrespected as a biracial rapper in the American and Canadian hip-hop, music industry; however, by illuminating these forms of oppression, he also highlights larger issues around racial profiling and draws a wide audience. He raps about self-doubt

that stemmed from oppressors and aligns himself with injustices faced by many members of the black community. Hence, Drake directly reflects post-colonial histories (Gilroy, 1993) of racism, but challenges the notion of race as simply a biological and hierarchical system. By identifying with his father in this music video and identifying with his mother's Jewish practices in *HYFR* Drake places himself within different communities.

Gilroy's (1993) construction of ships as mobile elements illustrates the mixing of cultures which are joined through travels between fixed places. In *Worst Behavior*, Drake visits Memphis and walks the streets with large crowds to appear to be included within this cultural group, in this particular city; yet, Drake has spent most of his time growing up in Toronto with his mother. By having his father appear in the video itself, Drake symbolically and physically represents his cultural heritage and racial background within the video to demonstrate how it has shaped his identity today. By alluding to this particular location, Drake illustrates how he continually adapts to different communities to participate in wider, cultural communities and global markets; however, he does this by compartmentalizing his sense of self to fit within previously understood categories of cultural identities. He is able to connect with Memphis through his father and is further able to reach out to fans who can connect to this particular location.

Identities are progressively fragmented and absorbed into commercial practice by musical artists in society, "and from [Drake's position as a] local artists...how [can he] navigate that sea [of society] without finding himself back in a figural slave ship of exploitation?" (White, 2012, p.7). Hence, Drake cannot escape the prejudice of being labeled black or not black enough, nor ever being labeled fully white. His skin colour becomes a signifier for his identity as situated in the historical prejudices and forms of oppression faced by biracial members of Western society. Drake has roots within an African American culture and by drawing on Gilroy's (1993) discussion about the creation of a modern "black identity", Drake demonstrates that no globalization nor identity exists outside of history with the intermixing of cultures and classes.

Stereotypes of "black bodies" (Fouché, 2013) are essentially drawn from historical articulations of the position of black people during colonization as a result of white supremacy. Stereotypes based on historical representations in society (Hall, 1973) and are solidified through the media. With a constant interplay between appealing to the perceptions of consumers' and establishing an artists' authenticity within this industry, I understand music videos as a vehicle for expressing culture but also a process of actively producing perceptions of locality, forms of difference, and nationality through performance. Drake draws on stereotypes about members of the "black community" and people living in Memphis by representing his father and his friends dress in suits, do-rags, and thick chains. Morley (2001) discusses the need for media, mobility, and power to develop our idea of home and the presence of postmodern anxieties. With a rapidly changing sense of identity, through processes of globalization in a postmodern era, it may increase a desire to constitute "home" and claim a space to represent our identities. These shared feelings of liminality and otherization are exemplified in the literature about diaspora.

Drake inhabits different communities and draws on specific traditions and practices of each group; however, this problematizes a solidified identity. Clifford (1994), alludes to a community in

flux as he describes the “Black Atlantic” as being “British” or “something else” to highlight how communities shift from a “pure” white collectivized group of people. These othered identities take a liminal third space in constructing an entity that articulates differences rather than essentialist ideas. A continuity is created between categorical differences; however, postmodern instability of fluid identities create mixtures of entirely different phenomena. There is no continuity between different religions, races, and national identities, but rather a melting pot of these different customs, values, and traditions in a postmodern society. This diasporic culture works to preserve and recover traditions through their communities (Gilroy, 1993), similar to Drake who wishes to establish his position in different cultures and communities. With the increase in rapid exchanges of commodities, formation of diasporas, and cross-group memberships, hybridity dominates cultural and social understandings of identity more-so than clearly defined groups. Drake demonstrates both hard earned wealth and entitlements to money through power, as he symbolizes different positions of power in the music industry. Appaduri (1990) draws on Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities” (1983), constituted by historically situated imaginations of persons and groups, spread across the world. Diasporic movements demonstrate the process of migrants departing to new places and struggling to establish their own identity. By speaking to fluid concepts of oneself, Drake is able to share his experience of not belonging and feeling othered, by paradoxically remaining ambiguous in fully belonging to any one community, to appeal to different segments of a wider population. The formation of diasporas overrules previous assumptions about clearly defined group memberships; hence, forms of hybrid identities are a result from rapid changes in a postmodern world.

10. Postmodern, Hybridized Identities

Is Drake black or white? Is he Jewish or Catholic? Is he Canadian or American? In a modern world, we would demand that he choose; but in a postmodern world, we can embrace a cultural mosaic of Drake as an individual, without forcing him to make a choice in claiming one racial or cultural identity? This willingness to accept contradiction is distinctive of postmodernism diversity. Hardt and Negri (2000) would argue that a unified, but not homogenized, diversity is desirable. An embrace of contradictions can result in modern anxieties and a fear of inauthenticity. Drake is an instructive example of this issue as he is often questioned for being “authentic” and constantly redefines himself through his music videos. Latour (1993) looks at the postmodern world as indecisive or incomplete, and the modern world as representing a purification of social meanings. These ideas of essentialism stifle creativity and hybridity and the ability to overcome suppressed minorities or marginalized groups. So Drake is seen as both foreign and local? And to whom? Drake is both a product of music production and a process of cultural negotiations of identity, place, and practices, through uneven forms of exchange between these different ideologies. He constantly rearticulates and challenges social norms in his Western culture. Mobility studies support the examination of multicultural melting pots of postmodern identity politics. According to Hardt and Negri (2000), constantly fluid processes of interactions take place as a cause of globalization: there is a continual flow of exchanges

cultural information, values, and norms. Therefore, hybridity has become the process of unification between many different parties within the system of globalization.

With the rise of technology, music artists are able to generate sociological and economic gains through cultural pluralism, by transcending geographic and aesthetic barriers. Hybridity can be seen as a form of resistance by colonized. "Covering" as described by Kraidy (2005), is a process which American soldiers changed their name to American singers in Europe to avoid othering; similarly, relates to Drake combines of imitation and adaptation of different cultural communities in his music videos. Through an arguably superficial process, Drake identifies with different groups; yet, by sharing his personal struggles, he is able to claim positions in different communities. We can examine these videos to determine the ways in which his body is marked and read in society. He accumulates different positions within society by further identifying cultural practices and norms from different communities; however, he fails to commit to one "pure" identity across his music videos. With the rise of cultural integration, in a postmodern world, one must question if there are ever "pure" forms to be retrieved. In being selective, however, Drake represents certain aspects of religious, cultural, national, and racial identities which may become essentializing of minority groups and create a seemingly contradictory, totalizing "star image".

In "Rebranding Africa" (2012), Menkes shows the use of particular "images of beauty and grace" far removed from "violence and poverty" to choose a specific representation of Africa. This process creates ideoscapes and mediascapes that mask rather than restructure the culture. Music videos are effective ways of getting ideas out, but they become a commodity rather than a weapon for class and race struggle. This form of masking a culture (Menkes 2012), by changing their representations in the media, may demonstrate Drake's lack of authenticity in holding solidified positions within different cultures; however, with identities in a continual flux in the postmodern world, do these changes in media reflect an authentic, continually changing identity of Drake as a Black/ Jewish, American/Canadian, working class member of society, and high-class rapper?

11. Conclusion

Through processes of globalization in a postmodern era, there is an increasing shift to understand identity as hybridized and fluid. Drake embraces and neglects different racial, class, cultural and religious identities within and between his music videos to construct a hybridized star image. Drake demonstrates the senses of inclusivity formed through an identification with different communities and labels, as fixed within actions, symbols, and objects in his music videos. Through different narratives in each video, Drake diminishes the need to fully commit to one identity over another, in a hierarchical sense of importance in ranking these different positions he holds. His star image becomes a large promotional tool in which he is able to identify with many groups through his experiences of various forms of oppression. Drake is able to rap about these personal experiences which legitimizes his position in the hip-hop music industry itself.

I address issues power relations in attending to different forms of cultural, racial, and religious identities. I recognize Drake's privilege in being able to choose to identify with different communities and the severity of freely expressing these compartmentalized senses of self, through the medium of music videos. This privilege is not shared by all members of the marginal groups he participates with and attempts to represent in his music videos. I recognize the hostility that may be faced in a fluid engagement and disengagement with different communities, which could potentially be more violent to someone without this privilege. I also understand the paradox in which Drake uses essentialist ideas, through signifiers in his music videos to construct a hybrid identity and speak about his experiences through the discourse of hip hop and rap music.

Whether as an economic ploy, a social critique, or simply a form of expression, Drake embodies the struggles of many minority communities and constructs a postmodern, hybrid identity. He is forced to compartmentalize his sense of self in different music videos, based on his use of signifiers to represent different communities, practices, locations, and cultures. These signifiers become representative of his hybridized star image in a globalized world. Drake retains the ability to relate but not complete assimilate to these different communities. He demonstrates the postmodern construction of an intersectional identity within discourses of race, class, and nationality. Drake demonstrates a form of empowerment by embracing different social, political, and racial labels as cultivated through affordances of his online music videos.

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